



EXHIBIT 1
DATE 2-16-07
HB HJ 32

February 16, 2007

TO: Chairman Sonju and Members of the House Transportation Committee

FROM: Roger Thompson, volunteer advocate, AARP Montana

RE: **Support of HJ 32, Urge increased funding for public transportation**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for the record my name is Roger Thompson, volunteer advocate for AARP Montana. AARP is a non-profit, non-partisanship membership organization with 153,000 members in Montana.

At AARP, our vision is to help Americans 50 and over age with dignity and purpose. But there can be no dignity or purpose without the ability to get from here to there. Meeting the needs of an aging population, keeping them safe as drivers and then mobile and independent when they stop driving are all top priorities.

AARP Montana supports HJ 32 because we recognize that transportation is the crucial link between individuals and their communities and is essential for independence. For older people, mobility is a vital component of their quality of life and having affordable, easy-to-use, and flexible transportation options is essential. Without mobility, older Americans are cut off from family, social opportunities and civic activities. It makes it harder to go to the doctor or the pharmacy. It too often leads to depression, obesity, even alcoholism, and declining health in general. I'm sure many of you in this room know a relative, friend or neighbor who's gone from vibrant and vigorous to depressed and withdrawn, simply because they have no easy way to get around.

Communities need to enhance mobility options for those who no longer drive. Older Americans still depend disproportionately upon automobiles to meet their transportation needs. The mobility challenge will be increasingly greater for the baby boomer generation. Not just because of their large numbers and their long life expectancy, but because the baby boomers are the most mobile generation in the history of civilization. They've lived their entire adult lives in a society where driving and living are practically one and the same. But for many elderly people there comes that day when they have to hand over the keys. Livable communities must have alternatives for those who cannot or choose not to drive, or they could become increasingly isolated.

Despite the need for transportation alternatives, the availability of public transportation is limited, particularly in rural areas. As a society and as individual communities, we have to be ready. The challenge is an awesome one, but we have no choice. We have to do it if we want to stay true to universal American values like freedom, dignity and choice.

I ask you to support HJ 32.